

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 6325

DEPT FOR EUR/CE, EUR/EX, PROTOCOL

E O 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PDIP, GE
SUBJ: HOTEL RESERVATIONS IN THE GDR

1. WITHOUT PRIOR NOTIFICATION, HOTELS IN EAST BERLIN AND THE GDR HAVE RECENTLY DECLINED TO HONOR REQUESTS FOR RESERVATIONS FROM THE EMBASSY. RATHER, THEY HAVE REFERRED US TO THE DIPLOMATIC SERVICES AGENCY (DLA) AS THE SOLE AGENT FOR OBTAINING SUCH RESERVATIONS. THE DLA HAS CONFIRMED ITS ROLE, HASTENING TO ADD THAT THIS IS A SERVICE PROVIDED TO ALL FOREIGN MISSIONS AND IS NOT MEANT TO HINDER HOTEL BOOKINGS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

2. THE PROCEDURE IS TO CONTACT THE DLA IN BERLIN, REQUEST THE RESERVATION, PAY A FEE OF 5 MARKS PER PERSON PER STAY, AND PICK UP A HOTEL GUARANTEE RESERVATIONS FORM ONCE THE BOOKING HAS BEEN CONFIRMED. THE DLA HAS ADVISED US THAT THIS PROCEDURE, REQUESTED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, EVOLVED IN ORDER TO SOLVE TWO GENERAL COMPLAINTS;

A. SEVERAL DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT MAKING DIRECT CONFIRMED RESERVATIONS WITH HOTELS, WITHOUT SPACE BEING AVAILABLE UPON ARRIVAL.

B. COMPLAINTS BY HOTELS OF "NO-SHOWS", LAST MINUTE CANCELLATIONS, ETC. BY MEMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS AND THEIR REFUSAL TO PAY CANCELLATION OR OTHER SUCH FEES.

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3. THE EMBASSY NOTES THAT THE NEW RESERVATION PROCEDURE,

BY CENTRALIZING THE PROCESS WITH THE DLA, COULD ALLOW FOR GDR CONTROL AND CURTAILMENT OF TRAVEL BY EMBASSY PERSONNEL. WHILE NOT APPLICABLE TO EAST BERLIN AND THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS, HOTEL RESERVATION CONTROL THROUGHOUT THE GDR COULD EFFECTIVELY PREVENT ANY EMBASSY TRAVEL REQUIRING AN OVERNIGHT STAY. TO DATE, HOWEVER, THE DLA HAS FILLED EVERY REQUEST MADE AND RESERVATIONS HAVE BEEN HONORED UPON RECEIPT OF THE RESERVATION DOCUMENT AT THE HOTEL.

4. WHILE WE OBJECT TO THE BUREAUCRATIC PROCEDURE THAT REQUIRES DUAL CONTACT WITH A GO-BETWEEN (DLA) AND THE NECESSITY TO PICK UP THE RESERVATION FORM EACH TIME, WE ALSO NOTE THAT RESERVATIONS HAVE BEEN BOOKED IN EVERY CASE THUS FAR. THEREFORE, THE EMBASSY INTENDS TO MAKE NO OBJECTION TO THE BASIC PROCEDURE AT THIS TIME. GIVEN A REFUSAL IN THE FUTURE, THE EMBASSY WOULD THEN OBJECT ACCORDINGLY.

5. WE DO INTEND, HOWEVER, TO TAKE ISSUE WITH THE CHARGE OF 5 MARKS PER PERSON PER STAY. FOR PERSONNEL TRAVEL OF A FAMILY OF FOUR, FOR EXAMPLE, SPENDING ONE NIGHT EACH IN TWO GDR CITIES, THE BOOKING FEE ALONE WOULD RUN TO 40 MARKS OR APPROXIMATELY \$15. SINCE PART OF THE RATIONALE FOR THE DLA INVOLVEMENT IS LOST CANCELLATION FEES BY HOTELS, WE INTEND TO SUGGEST THAT THE DLA CHARGE THIS 5 MARKS AS AN ADVANCE AGAINST ROOM COST TO BE USED AS A CREDIT AGAINST THE TOTAL ROOM COST AT EACH HOTEL. IN CASE OF NO-SHOW, THE FEE WOULD BE FORFEITED. SUCH A PROCEDURE IS USED, FOR EXAMPLE, BY TOURIST INFORMATION AND SERVICES OFFICES IN NUMEROUS WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.COOPER

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